

# PICTURE STUDY

BY

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## PART I.

### THE DEVELOPMENT OF PAINTING BY SCHOOLS

Previous to the thirteenth century pictorial art consisted largely of mosaics, that is to say, of figures made of little blocks or cubes of colored stone or glass set in cement. These were not much more than colored patterns though many had considerable value as illustrations, and were well composed. This form of art was probably invented by the Romans, who decorated the floors, walls, and ceilings of their buildings in this manner. Later the Christian Church, particularly the Eastern or Byzantine branch, adopted this as the style of decoration of sacred edifices. At first only the figures of Christ and the Apostles were thus rendered, but later a few subjects relating to the life of Christ were selected as suitable for this purpose. There was but little progress during this early period, however, owing largely to the limited choice of subjects and the conventionalized method of treatment. Even after the introduction of paint, about the thirteenth century, a medium easier to handle and less costly than mosaic, there was but little evidence of advance. Artists were still limited in their choice of subjects and circumscribed in their method of treatment. Accordingly the art of this later period also was stiff, the style remained mainly decorative, and the coloring symbolic.

But the Renaissance awakening gradually changed all this. Artists now began to study nature at first hand and see its beauty. They developed the power of analysis, got more confidence, and began to display originality in creative work. This change was largely the result of three new lines of study which were taken up during this period—the *study of anatomy*, which led to the more accurate drawing of the figures; the *study of perspective*, which gave artists the power to depict distance or depth in their pictures; and the *study of composition*, which resulted in the grouping and arranging of the figures so as better to convey the purpose of the artist.

These Renaissance changes assumed marked regional characteristics. The nations to the south of a chain of mountains stretching across Europe, and having the Alps as their centre, differ greatly from those found north of that barrier. The southern peoples, living under sunny skies, are pleasure-loving, and have an art which is poetic, idealistic, abstract. The northern races, living under gray skies, are stern and hardy; they seek truth and realism rather than idealism. Moreover there is a difference in the backgrounds of these two European cultures. The south had the Old Roman remains of

classic art in the cities, and the mediaeval mosaic work on the walls of the churches; the former ideal and fine, and the latter large and sumptuous. As a consequence their new art was large and bold and emphasized essentials. The north on the other hand, had a background of ancient Norse legends, of mediaeval stained glass windows, and of finely illuminated manuscripts, all of which tended to produce an art rich in coloring, but fine and minute in every detail.

The materials used for painting also helped to make a difference. In the south the dry powdered colors were mixed with the whites of eggs and other substances that would produce mixtures not greatly unlike the present day tempera of showcard colors. These were used in painting either easel pictures or frescoes — where the paint was placed directly on fresh plastered walls — and were better fitted for painting large areas than minute details. In the north, however, the dry colors were mixed with oil or partly resinous varnish; and the paints thus prepared, when applied to easel pictures with a small soft-haired brush, produced when dry, a work that was hard, smooth, and glossy. As small brushes were used, the work was minute in detail and exact.

### **APPRECIATION OF PICTURES**

The intelligent appreciation of a picture depends on two things: the subject of the picture, and the ability of the observer to understand something of the thought and feeling of the artist. To go about this in a systematic way, seek first to determine the aim or idea of the artist, his purpose in selecting the figures and objects in the picture and in arranging them as he did, and his sense of rhythm or orderly movement. Observe also the nature of the light, the colors used, the dominating color tone, and the suitability of this tone to the subject. In more recent pictures the brush work is often an important factor in the artist's endeavor to express his thought.

### **I.—ITALIAN ART**

As suggested above, early Italian art was fostered by the Church. During the mediaeval period and the early Renaissance the subjects, as we have seen, were wholly of a religious nature. Adhering to the early tradition, the figures were rendered in a conventional manner, that is to say, each figure had a somewhat set expression and was placed in surroundings which were rendered decoratively. With the Renaissance — which in art meant largely a return to nature — a greater effort was made to study the human figure and to paint it in a more lifelike manner. The aim of the early art was, in most instances, to teach some religious truth or to illustrate some Biblical event. For such purposes the colors were symbolic—each color was made to symbolize some definite quality or idea. Red, for instance, called up the idea of love, orange signified benevolence, and blue was regarded as the symbol of truth. In regard to technique, the artists of the Renaissance period first mastered the drawing of the human figure, and then the principles of perspective. Finally they broadened the scope of art to include other subjects chiefly derived from classic sources.

## AN ITALIAN PICTURE

"The Sistine Madonna," painted by Raphael, illustrates many of the characteristics of Italian art. Both as to face and figure this painting exemplifies the classic ideal. The figure is drawn in conformity with ancient Greek standards in sculpture, according to which the lengths and proportions of the several parts were definitely fixed. The face is also the embodiment of the classic technique. The brow is of proper width; the forehead is the right height; and the nose is properly proportioned. By such means the artist was able not only to produce an almost perfect figure, but also to give his painting character and spiritual force.

Traces of early Italian symbolism may be seen. The cherub hosts suggest the infinite heavenly abode. The character of the individual is revealed in the colors used in painting the garments. Sextus, for example, the man on the left, is painted in a yellow and orange robe with a red lining. This suggests that he is a man of wisdom and benevolence, with a deep love for humanity. Barbara, the woman on the right, has an overmantle of green, and a skirt of gray—a combination of colors intended to portray strength in self-renunciation and activity in all good works. The yellow and orange and blue appearing in the upper part of the dress, lead us to infer that Barbara is a woman devoted to ministering to the poor in the spirit of pure unselfishness.

The light used in the picture does not look like sunlight or light coming from a window. It is diffused and comes partly from above and partly from the left, in order to show the modeling of the features. This is sometimes called studio light in contrast with light from the ordinary sources, which was preferred, as we shall see, by the artists of the north.

Lastly, in the matter of arrangement or composition the picture is representative of the Italian school of the best period. The triangular form of the composition is readily observable. The heads of the Virgin and of the Christ Child occupy the apex of the triangle, while the other leading figures fill the lower corners. The main lines of the picture are so arranged as to lead the eye in the direction of the apex; while from this point ripples of light and shade seem to radiate in every direction. The shoulders of the Child and the Mother are bathed in a flood of this soft light.

This painting is representative of the formal or academic type of art. The arrangement and the draftsmanship are absolutely correct. Great artists are able to paint pictures of this type which, like "The Sistine Madonna," have wonderful beauty and power. But in the hands of lesser men such formal treatment is apt to give the impression of a machine-made product—

"Faultily faultless, icily regular, splendidly null."

## II.—THE EARLY NORTHERN SCHOOL

The early painters in Northern Europe loved to paint objects. They were all splendid craftsmen, and many of them were also able artists. They saw in every object, no matter how insignificant, beauty

which they attempted to portray. They did not, however, like the southern school, select and formally arrange the parts of their pictures, but painted whatever was before them exactly as it was. Hence it has been said of these northern painters that "they held a mirror up to nature." In their pictures nothing was accented and nothing was repressed. They gave little attention to the feelings or emotions; but there is, nevertheless, an intimacy established by their pictures which in most instances reveals the life and habits of the people.

Since these northern artists knew nothing of the principles of formal composition, they achieved no monumental effects by sweeping lines and other such devices. But the figures are arranged naturally and with a fine feeling for balance. The centre of interest is well placed; and it is always so accentuated by its color, size, or position, that it is very easy to discover.

The light, which was sunlight or light coming directly through a window and falling on the objects, was admirably suited to bring out the colors, the subtle transparencies, and the delicate gradations of light and shade. The light in the pictures of the south, as we have seen, was utilized to accentuate the modeling; in the north, however, its main use was to bring out the delicate nuances of color.

It is clear that in art of this kind there is no place for the symbolism of color. The purpose of symbolic coloring is to convey some general truth, and this was not attempted by the early northern artists. Their aim was merely to portray the facts. Hence in most of their pictures the practical things of life, such as the manners and customs of the people, the nature of the clothing, and the interiors of the houses, were clearly and faithfully revealed. Artists who paint in this manner are called *realists*, because they seek to paint real things just as they are, rather than to introduce their own ideas of truth and morals and justice by means of color symbolism and other similar devices.

The technique of applying the colors was strongly influenced by the practice of illuminating manuscripts before the invention of printing. This work called for great delicacy of treatment and naturally tended to develop skill in the painting of minute details. For work of this kind the most suitable medium is oil. It is also necessary in realistic art to reproduce with great exactness the textural qualities of all sorts of material, such as silk, wool, paper, glass, fur, and feathers. Hence the mastery of this technique was also an important factor in the development of northern art. The north, in short, developed a technique in every respect well fitted to express those details which tend to give the observer a feeling of friendly intimacy with the subject. At times, to be sure, this was achieved at the cost of diverting the attention somewhat from the center of interest of the picture.

Observe the portrait "George Giszze" or as sometimes called "The Merchant Giszze" by Holbein. Compare it with "The Sistine Madonna," or better yet, with the portraits "The Mona Lisa," by da Vinci, or "The Doge," by Bellini, painted about the same time. Observe the arrangement, the background, the light, the color, and



details in each. Enumerate the qualities in the portrait of the merchant which are stressed by the artist. What factors in the general style of painting of the northern school are manifest in this picture?

### III.—LATER DUTCH AND FLEMISH ART

Early in the sixteenth century the Dutch section of the Netherlands (Holland) became Protestant and about a century later won its independence from Spain. During this period Dutch art attained a high standard of excellence. Rembrandt, Vermeer, and Hals are outstanding Dutch painters of this period. "The Avenue of Trees" by Hobbema, and "The Night Watch" by Rembrandt, which are studied in Grade VIII, were Dutch paintings of the seventeenth century.

The southern portion of the Netherlands, however, now known as Belgium, did not aspire to independence, but remained loyal to Spain and the Catholic faith. This region was the home of many of the Flemish painters of this period. These Flemish artists, because of their position, were in close relation with the north, and were also strongly influenced by the south. An examination of Flemish art reveals influences from both these sources. Rubens, for example, the greatest Flemish artist, loved to paint in rich colors and produce beautiful forms. This was the result of northern influence. But in the arrangement of his figures and the flow of his lines he was largely under the influence of the south. This is an example of the general truth that as time goes on and intercourse becomes easier, art naturally tends to become more cosmopolitan.

#### A LATER FLEMISH PICTURE

"The Descent from the Cross," by Rubens, is chosen as an example of later Flemish art. But while this is one of Rubens' best works, it is not especially representative of the Flemish school. It was painted on 1611 on the artist's return from Italy where he had been studying for some years. It is a religious subject, and shows both in color and in line the influence of Italy. The picture is not designed to teach us, but rather to arouse our emotions. This emotional appeal is made in several ways. For instance, the particular moment is chosen when the head fell over, which serves to give the subject of the picture a particularly ghastly and deathlike appearance. The effect is further heightened by the contrast between the color of the body and that of the attendants and also by the contrast between the limpness and lifelessness of the figure of Christ and the ruggedness and virility of the others. A feeling of sympathy is also aroused by the tender way in which all are handling the limp body. What Rubens really did was to take from Italy what he could use of the southern technique and add to it his wonderful ability, the heritage of the north, to paint the human form and heighten the effect by rich glowing color.

### IV.—THE FRENCH SCHOOL

The French school of art may be regarded as a branch or derivative of the Flemish school, though its progress was halted by the

Hundred Years' War and later struggles. In the seventeenth century, however, French art was fostered by the monarchy to such an extent that Paris became the art centre of Europe, a position she has held ever since. Due to this fostering influence the early pictures were painted in a manner which is generally called the "Grand Manner." This manner of painting arose from an attempt to depict the official pomp and elegance of the French court in the Italian classic style. Naturally such an attempt could only result in pictures which were cold and formal, lacking in spontaneity. But the revolution of 1789 and the period of the First Empire brought about great changes in French art. The range of subjects was now greatly increased, and art began to find expression in a great variety of ways. The coldness and formality of the earlier period gave way to warmth and romanticism in the new. The heroism of labor was now deemed worthy of a place in art as well as the heroism of war. And the smooth and glossy technique of the preceding period gave place to the rich and colorful treatment of the later school.

### FRENCH PICTURES FOR STUDY

"The Dance of the Nymphs," by Corot, "The Sower," by Millet, and "The Song of the Lark," by Breton, are chosen as typical of the French work of this later period. It must be remembered, however, that these pictures represent but a small section of the French art of the nineteenth century. The first of those named is a lyric masterpiece; the second expresses the seriousness and the heroic dignity of labor; and the third reveals the spirit of the toiler ever responsive to beauty. Each is closely related to nature and has a charm peculiarly its own.

When these pictures are compared with paintings of the Dutch naturalistic school, great differences are at once apparent. To understand these differences compare the pictures mentioned with "The Avenue of Trees," by Hobbema, "The Windmill," by Ruysdael, and "Young Girl Peeling Apples," by Maes, or with any other Dutch pictures of that period which are available. The Dutch, to be sure, also loved to depict domestic life and peasant pastimes in their pictures. But they painted the scene just *as it was* because of their delight in the subject for its own sake. They were intensely interested in the life about them and reproduced it with extraordinary skill in a direct natural manner. The French painters, on the other hand, *interpreted* the scene according to their personal temperament and views of life. Thus "The Dance of the Nymphs" reveals to us a landscape it is true, but it is something more than this; it is a landscape suffused with the products of Corot's imagination and poetic temperament. It is the same with "The Sower." Millet paints in this picture not just a laboring man, but the epic of labor; and he does this with a minimum of line and other detail so that we may better catch the deeper meaning. Breton also, though born and brought up in the city, had wonderful ideals regarding rural life. Hence in "The Song of the Lark" he reveals the spirit of the girl rather than her task. Millet depicts the heroic in labor and its deeper meaning; Breton the spirit of the laborer in spite of the toil.

## V.—BRITISH ART

Britain has found her most artistic expression in the field of literature. When, during the Tudor Period, English scholars journeyed to Italy in search of the New Learning, it is said that they were but little impressed with the wonderful work of the Italian artists. But they were filled with enthusiasm for the literature of Greece and Rome, and on returning to their native land they inspired the splendid literary productions of the Elizabethan Age.

It was not until the eighteenth century that the influence of continental art began to be greatly felt in Britain. The insularity of her position, the temperament of her people, and the intensity of her Puritanism, which looked askance at the emotionalism and warmth of the art of the continent, had all conspired to remove Britain from the influence of the continental schools. Previous to the eighteenth century the art of Britain had consisted for the most part of portraits painted by such foreign artists as Holbein, Van Dyke, and Lely, many of whom, as we have seen, were accustomed to visit England to paint the portraits of the nobility. It was largely due to the influence of these foreign masters that Reynolds and Gainsborough, who with their followers constitute a main branch of the early British school, were also painters of portraits. But there was another important branch of the British school, best represented, perhaps, in the work of Constable, who painted pictures of the countryside in a natural manner. It must not be supposed, however, that British art developed as a mere reflection of the art of the continent. The British artists added much that was their own. Britain has, in fact, especially in the two great departments of portraiture and landscape-painting, made a distinctive contribution to the art of the world.

## BRITISH PICTURES

The "Portrait of Mrs. Siddons," by Reynolds, and "The Cornfield," by Constable, are selected as representative of these two departments of British art respectively. The subject of the former was a famous actress of Reynolds' day. It was clearly the aim of the artist to introduce the dramatic element in his treatment of this portrait. In this he departed from the usual purpose of the portrait-painters of his time, who aimed merely to reproduce the likenesses and delineate the characters of their subjects. This dramatic quality of "Mrs. Siddons" is, however, in keeping with the spirit of the age. It was the age of the actor Garrick and the orator Burke, who brought to the stage and the rostrum respectively the same quality of dramatic expression Reynolds sought to portray in this picture by means of the brush.

Because of the artificiality of society in the eighteenth century the British portrait art of that time inclined somewhat toward formalism and conventionality of treatment; but it was in no way comparable in this respect to the French art of the same period done in the "Grand Manner." In the following century the formal style became less and less in evidence in British art as in the art of France. It was in general the aim of the British artist to depict character through straightforward portraiture, though the result sometimes



savored of prettiness rather than truth. Of this latter tendency, however, there is no evidence in "Mrs. Siddons." As a rule the British artist keeps pretty close to the subject of the picture, aiming at correct and literal drawing, with little deviation toward poetry or fancy.

In "The Cornfield" is to be seen the charm of the English country side. It belongs to the period when the English people, shut up in their rapidly growing industrial towns, began to see and delight in the charm of rural England.

## VI.—AMERICAN ART

The United States has not, as yet, produced a highly distinctive school of art. The reason for this may be found in the fact that such a large part of American history belongs to what may be called the machine age. The development of the modern safe and rapid modes of travel and of the quick and accurate methods of reproducing works of art, such, for instance, as the photogravure process, has resulted in new art forms being soon widely known throughout the world. For this reason, in a highly modernized nation like the United States, a new style or school of art is not likely to appear. The artists are apt to adopt one of the established modes. One artist may adhere to the formal style; another may be a romanticist; and still another may be influenced by the art of Japan. For this reason the chief distinctions in American art are traceable to the already existing styles in which the artists have tried to express themselves according to their temperaments.

## AMERICAN PICTURES

This tendency is exemplified in the two American pictures selected for study in this course, viz., "My Mother," by Whistler, and "Fog Warning," by Homer. In the former there is unmistakable evidence of Japanese influence. Japanese art is noted for what it suggests rather than for what it actually expresses. It is concerned primarily with the spirit of the subject rather than with the literal correctness of the outward form. And so Whistler, by the simplicity of the color scheme and the arrangement of the lines, suggests in this famous portrait the tenderness of age. There is a quiet dignity expressed by the spacing of the vertical and horizontal lines. In the color scheme there are but five tones of grayed green, but these are so harmoniously related to one another as to constitute what Whistler called a "Symphony" in color. How different is this color scheme from that of a portrait like "Mrs. Siddons," for example; and yet how beautifully it suggests the tender sweetness of the aged mother!

In "The Fog Warning," on the other hand, there is just as clear evidence of the influence of British landscape art. This painting treats of an event which probably occurred off the coast of Maine. It is rendered with a truth to nature which is strongly suggestive of British naturalism. Homer was a self-made artist, and his natural inclination was to reproduce in his pictures what he actually saw. In this picture it is evidence that the artist was interested in his sub-



ject for its own sake and wished to record his impressions of it. The lone boat, the wide expanse of water, and the coming fog, are all so skilfully handled that the picture arouses at once a feeling of interest and sympathy on the part of the observer.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Why did pictorial art develop first in Italy?
2. Compare the early art of Italy with that of the north as to (a) subjects (b) the arrangement of the figures; (c) the nature of the light; (d) the colors used. Give reasons for any differences noted.
3. Why did the Church foster art in Italy? What bearing had this on the subsequent development of art in Southern Europe?
4. What characteristics of Italian art are revealed in "The Sistine Madonna," by Raphael?
5. Explain the terms "classicism," "naturalism," and "realism," as applied to art. Give names of artists or pictures which help to explain your statements.
6. Name several of the qualities in the picture "George Giszze," by Holbein, which illustrate the tendencies of the early northern painters.
7. Give reasons why these early artists painted each minute object with great care. Why did they not accent the centre of interest and repress the various other features in the picture?
8. In "The Descent from the Cross," by Rubens, what qualities are peculiarly Italian and what are Flemish? What are the characteristic qualities of Rubens' art?
9. What are the distinguishing qualities of French art as revealed by the pictures you have studied?
10. Why is Paris generally considered the art centre of Europe?
11. From your knowledge of history can you give a reason for the differences in French art before and after the French Revolution?
12. Why was British art slow in developing?
13. State any differences between British and French art which have been brought out in the pictures selected for study?
14. What types of subjects are characteristic of British art? Give reasons for this.
15. Why is American art more cosmopolitan than the earlier art of European countries?
16. Within rectangles about 3-in.  $\times$  4-in. make black and white compositions of "The Cornfield" and "The Dance of the Nymphs."
17. Compare the compositions in "The Song of the Lark" and "The Sower." Make outline sketches in rectangle 3-in.  $\times$  4-in. to illustrate your answer.

## PART II.

COMPARISON OF PICTURES OF THE  
SAME SUBJECT

## PORTRAITS

In the art of portraiture, whether in painting or in sculpture, two extreme types have been developed which may be called respectively the *natural* and the *conventional*. Thus the early examples of Egyptian statuary were natural or real, while those of the later period, exemplified in the statues of the later Pharaohs, were conventional. By this we mean that in the early art each statue was like the individual it was supposed to represent, while in the art of the later period there was little to serve to distinguish one Pharaoh from another; each statue was merely a synthesis of the qualities of majesty, wisdom, strength, calmness, etc., which were supposed to characterize all the Pharaohs alike. The Greeks of the "Golden Age" also favored the conventionalized type in that there were certain standardized measurements to which the faces and figures had to conform; but nevertheless they gave to their statues some of the appearance of life by introducing a few striking or characteristic features. During the Greco-Roman period still more individuality was expressed, though classic art never became wholly freed from the conventional. The tendency toward naturalism continued, however, and the sculptures of Donatello, an artist of the Renaissance period, were strongly naturalistic and lifelike. But it was not until the rise of the great portrait painters of northern Europe that a complete return was made to the naturalness that was the aim of the early Egyptian art.

Because of these opposing tendencies in art, most portraits can be classified broadly as belonging to the naturalistic or the conventional type. On the one hand portraits are painted which give an exact delineation of the form, the facial expression, and all the peculiarities of the figure and clothing of the individual. This represents extreme naturalism in art. On the other hand many painters aim rather to give a somewhat idealized likeness, repressing the facial blemishes and the details of clothing and background. This is what is known as conventionalism in art. Between these two extremes will be found the best portrait painting. As a rule portrait painters try not only to make a true likeness in the sense of faithfully reproducing the features, but also to express in the countenance the main characteristics of the individual as to temperament and spirit. Many artists of distinction are highly successful in this, and the result then is a great work of art, like Sargent's portrait of his friend and fellow-artist Chase, which is said to be "more like Chase than Chase himself."

We shall now proceed to the comparative study of three portraits which have been selected especially to exemplify these two principles of naturalism or realism on the one hand and conventionalism or idealism on the other. We shall also examine the devices used by the artists to suggest the spiritual qualities of the subject. The three

portraits are "George Gisze," by Hans Holbein the younger (1497-1543); "Mrs. Siddons as the Tragic Muse," by Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723-1792); and "The Artist's Mother," by James McNeill Whistler (1834-1903). It is desirable to place these portraits side by side to make it easy to compare them with one another and thus bring out the diverse techniques and points of view of the artists who painted them.

Holbein the younger (so called because his father was also a painter of merit) was born in Augsburg, Germany, in the year 1497. When he was still a young man he moved to Basel, Switzerland, which was at that time a centre of the printing of books. While there he made drawings for woodcuts to be used for illustrating the books. In these woodcut drawings all the minute details had to be brought out very clearly. Doubtless this training had something to do with the nature of his later art, which, as we shall see, was very realistic. He was also greatly influenced, without a doubt, by the fact that in nearly all the great art of Northern Europe with which he was surrounded, careful attention had been given to detail. Later in his life Holbein used to visit England to paint the portraits of distinguished people; and it was on the occasion of his second visit, about 1531, that he painted this portrait of George Gisze, the London agent for certain German business firms, and a member of the "Merchants of the Steelyard" in London.

The merchant is in his office in the act of opening the morning mail. As the eye roams about the room, observing one object after another, some idea of the merchant's character is formed. The carnations, the table cover, the books with the leather straps about them, the carvings of the shelf supports, and the articles on the table, all tend to give the impression that he was a man of taste and culture. His neat dress, his cloak, his cap, and his silk sleeves, add to this impression. Evidently this is the portrait of George Gisze the merchant. Apparently the aim was to paint him as his fellow-merchants knew him, as they would see him in his office surrounded by the articles with which he was usually associated.

The light comes in from a window in front of the merchant and throws his shadow on the wall behind. This brings out the pink coloring of the silk sleeves and vest which is repeated in the delicate tints of the carnations. The fine flesh tones in the face are set off in strong contrast with the black cap and cloak. But though the eye may rove about the room and linger here or there on some exquisite detail of line or coloring, it ever reverts in the end to the seemingly unemotional countenance of the merchant George Gisze.

Judging from this portrait Holbein was a realist, that is to say, he painted the external view of things without any personal bias. His aim was to paint what he saw, leaving us free to form our own conclusions. He did not seek to idealize his subject or teach a lesson. He merely tried to mirror the situation exactly as it was.

Now turn to the portrait of Mrs. Siddons, a leading Shakesperian actress of the eighteenth century. This portrait was painted by one who is generally considered the first portrait painter of the British school. Reynolds was born at Plympton in Devonshire. His father

was the rector of a grammar school, so that early in life he received a knowledge of the classics. Later he turned to painting. He studied first in London, and later in Rome, Florence, and Venice, where he perfected a style based largely on the great masters of the Renaissance. On his return to England he painted portraits of the leading people of the time, following in general the formal style of Italy, yet with a breadth of view worthy of a great painter.

Evidently Reynolds painted Mrs. Siddons the actress, rather than Mrs. Siddons the individual. In doing this he did not introduce the usual trapping of the stage, but attempted rather to suggest the emotional qualities peculiar to her profession by his treatment of the lines and colors. The subject sits in a large heavy chair. Her left hand is upraised and the fingers held still; and with her head held slightly sideways she is gazing on some distant object or listening intently to some voice. The ample spread of the garments helps us to forget the physical figure, and the larger form suggests something of the emotional atmosphere which surrounds a great actress.

The dramatic effect is further enhanced by the two shadowy figures behind. The figure on the right represents Crime and is shown as if caught with a stolen object in his hand. The other figure, with its disheveled hair and care-lined face, indicates Remorse. Thus does the actress listen to the inspiration of genius in order to portray on the stage the tragedies of life.

Plainly the aim of Reynolds was to paint a portrait of Mrs. Siddons in which the emotional qualities of an actress would be manifest. His problem was quite different from that of Holbein in painting George Gisze. Reynolds had to think through his problem. He had to secure a pose on the part of his subject which would best convey the idea he had in mind. He needed to amplify certain parts of the picture, repress others, and introduce features which would reveal the ideals and inspirational qualities of the actress. His object was not just to paint a portrait of Mrs. Siddons, as Holbein painted George Gisze, but to portray his subject as "The Tragic Muse."

Now turn to the portrait which Whistler painted of his mother not many years before her death. She had been his constant companion from the time he had gone to Paris to study art. In sickness and in health, in good times and in bad, she had encouraged him and stood by him with unshaken confidence in his ultimate success. On his part he greatly loved his mother, and, though sharp and sometimes bitter toward others, he was always kind and considerate to her.

While in Paris Whistler came under the influence of Velasquez, the Spanish painter, who gave much attention to color values, and also of Japanese artists, who secured their effects by simplicity of composition and the suggestiveness of line and color. So that instead of using strong colors as his contemporaries were doing, Whistler employed a few simple harmonies which he often called "symphonies" because of the subtle relations of the tones to each other.

An examination of the portrait will reveal some of these characteristics. The mother is seated on a straight backed chair with its side toward us. A lace cap covers her head; her hands are half concealed



in the lace handkerchief on her lap; and her feet are placed together on a low stool. In front is a curtain, and on the wall hangs a picture of her Chelsea home, with the frame of another picture just showing. The baseboard along the floor accentuates the horizontal lines. The whole arrangement is a composition of vertical and horizontal lines with one long diagonal. How different this is from the composition of either of the preceding portraits; but how well it harmonizes with the quiet and retiring nature of the aged mother!

The color scheme is a quiet harmony of grayed colors in five low values ranging from yellow-green to blue. The highest note is in the cap and face, and the lowest in the dress. Fine details are suppressed and, unlike the portrait of George Giszze, only the larger masses are shown. Each detail of the picture has a color tone of its own which is in harmony with all the other tones found in the picture; and the total effect is particularly appropriate to the subject of the portrait.

This portrait differs from the others in the use of color and line to suggest the character of the mother. The harmony of analogous colors, the fine balance of all the parts, and the rhythm of vertical and horizontal lines, all contribute to the main purpose of the picture, which is to bring out the calmness and resignation expressed in the mother's face. Many details are repressed, but what is told is so suggestive of the tenderness and dignity of aged motherhood as to give to the picture not only a personal but also a universal appeal.

The student should select other portrait paintings and compare them with the types studied.

## LANDSCAPES

Landscape art is the painting of objects in the landscape in their natural setting. The human figure may be introduced, and also objects which man has made, but only on condition that they form a part of the natural scene. This branch of art was slow in developing. At first objects seen in the landscape were introduced as individual features to help the artist to present the facts he wished to impress on the observer. The next step was to use the landscape as a background for other pictures. Lastly, pure landscape was painted in which figures or extraneous objects were wholly subsidiary. During the nineteenth century the landscape took a foremost place as an art subject.

As in portraiture, landscape art may be divided into two classes—the formal, which stresses arrangement, drawing, and color; and the natural, which aims to reproduce the landscape just as it appears. Obviously these two styles of painting are not entirely distinct. Almost all landscapes reveal something of both types, though the emphasis is usually on one or the other.

The landscapes selected for comparative study are “The Dance of the Nymphs,” by J. B. C. Corot (1796-1875), “The Cornfield,” by John Constable (1776-1837).

On placing these pictures side by side and examining them a number of differences are readily observable. The trees in Corot's

picture seem not so heavy as those of Constable; they fade off into the sky, while in "The Cornfield" the trees are sturdy and thick with foliage, and have a clear-cut outline. Further, the figures at play in the former, with their curious clothing, are in direct contrast with the boy, the men, the sheep, the dog, and the donkey in the latter. What purposes are served by these different techniques?

During his early years Corot received a good classical training and doubtless learned something of the fairies of mythological lore. Later he studied art in Italy where the classic or formally planned landscape was the accepted thing. On his return to France he modified his style and made his landscapes more natural. He was something of a dreamer and in his ramblings in the forests about Paris he was enraptured with the beauties of nature. He was constantly making sketches of these rural scenes, which, on his return to the city, he transferred to canvas.

"The Dance of the Nymphs" reflects his classical training on the one hand and his dreamy nature on the other. The picture is a poem on the freshness and beauty of the morning landscape. It is peopled with nymphs and satyrs, the fairies of mythology, who embody the spirit of the scene. The charming open space, surrounded by the bank on the right and the trees beyond, seemed to Corot but a fitting rendezvous for the woodland fairies. Nothing is harsh or sharp in outline. The softly blurred foliage fades off into the sky. Everything reflects the mood of the artist, the delight he took in nature, and the music of his soul.

The brightest note of color is to be found in the central group of nymphs. This tends to heighten the tone of the whole picture, standing, as it does, in contrast with the masses of grayed green, or silvery green as Corot called it, in the trees. The light breaking in from the right, forming with the sky a ring of brightness which is repeated in the ring of nymphs below, illuminates a scene which is really a nature-poem of the rarest beauty. In many respects Constable was the exact antithesis of Corot. He was the son of a miller in Suffolk and received a rather meagre education, but as a boy he loved to paint the trees, hedges, lanes, and streams of his native shire. He painted these natural objects just as he saw them with the rolling clouds overhead and the water sparkling in the bright sunshine. Knowing nothing of Italian art, and not caring for the early Dutch paintings, he worked directly from nature, choosing such a position that the composition of the picture might be left to the natural grouping of the objects in the landscape.

In this picture the cornfield or grainfield is the centre of interest and is painted a rich golden yellow. A lane leads to it, while on either side stand tall sturdy trees. Above, the rolling clouds, so frequently seen in England, complete the picture.

Corot selected from nature what suited his mood at the moment; Constable, on the other hand, painted each feature of the landscape because he loved it, and wanted to make it live in his picture. The trees are sturdy; the leaves are moving in the breeze, and reflecting the sunlight; the colors correspond to those of nature. It had been customary before Constable's time to color trees a conventional brown.

But from his direct observation of nature Constable dared to paint green things green, and yellow things yellow. At first he met with much opposition, but he ultimately succeeded, and is now generally acknowledged to have been the greatest modern landscape painter.

### FIGURE COMPOSITIONS

"The Sistine Madonna," by Raphael Sanzio (1483-1520).

"The Descent from the Cross," by (Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640).

The greatness of pictures such as these, in which some event is taking place, depends largely upon the moment which the artist selects for the setting of the picture. In "The Sistine Madonna" Raphael selects the moment when the veil which separates us from the heavenly glory has just been drawn aside (see upper right and left corners), and the Virgin and Child catch their first glimpse of the world of humanity—get their first conception, as it were, of the magnitude of the task the Child has come to undertake. In such a crisis the true character of each can be effectively revealed. In "The Descent from the Cross," on the other hand, Rubens aims to arouse our feelings by the tragedy of death, and by the realization that this was the gloomiest time in the world's religious history. To this end he selects the moment when the attendant on the left dropped the arm and head, which fell limp and deathlike.

The composition of each of these pictures is interesting from the above standpoint. In "The Sistine Madonna" the artist uses a triangular or pyramidal arrangement to carry the eye upward, and a fine luminous background of cherub faces. In "The Descent from the Cross" the body descends along a diagonal sweep of light against a dark gloomy background, the forms of the various attendants showing as irregular masses lit up here and there by the strong light within. The light in the former is a studio light, quiet and subdued, which brings out the modeling of each figure. In the latter the light comes from the white sheet and from the body of Christ, and is so bright that it lights up the faces of the attendants and throws the hollows into deep contrast, thus accentuating the dull gloomy surroundings.

Now let us study the aims of the artists with a view to appreciating the greatness of their conceptions.

Raphael was one of the great painters of the Italian Renaissance, as well as being one of the kindest and noblest of men. He, more than any other, saw the beauty of the classic form and united it with the finest conceptions of the Christian religion. Not only were many of his pictures masterpieces of composition, line, and color, but they were often masterpieces of spiritual insight as well. "The Sistine Madonna" is, perhaps, the greatest picture in religious art. It was painted for the monks of San Sisto in Pienza, Italy, as an altar-piece.

The Madonna in this picture is not seated on the throne, or holding the Child in her lap, but, with the full consciousness of the Divine purpose, and with unfaltering faith in the Child, she presents him to the heart of humanity—to the vast congregation to which St. Sextus



points. The seriousness of the struggle ahead and the magnitude of the task are shown in the faces of the Mother and the Child. Beautifully modelled, in each face is revealed something of the spirit within; it is Raphael's ability to reveal the spiritual side that makes "The Sistine Madonna" the great picture that it is. St. Sextus on the left looks hopefully toward the Child, while on the right St. Barbara, in loving solicitation for others, sees in the cherubs the opportunity for service.

In "The Descent from the Cross" Rubens' aim is to make a picture of contrasts. The utter helplessness and ghastliness of death are brought out in striking contrast to the strong figures of those who in life and strength minister the last rites. Joseph of Arimathea is on the left directing the lowering of the body. Peter is on the ladder opposite, while John supports the body. The mother, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary assist below. The pathos of death is accentuated by the reverential care of these attendants, so well depicted in their faces and hands. The strong light from the body is in contrast to the dark color of the clothing of the attendants, and the gloomy skies beyond. The long curve of the sheet and the body contrasts strongly with the angles and rounded forms of the figures on either side.

It is, however, to the head of Christ that all the lines of the composition lead. Follow the curving lines in from the margin of the picture and you will find that, like the overlapping leaves of a plant, they all lead to the drooping head. What a strong impression it all makes! By the skilful arrangement of lines, and by the contrasts in light and shade, Rubens has produced an effect which makes a deep impression, and arouses feelings of reverence and awe.

Two French peasant pictures showing different ideals on the part of the artists have also been selected for purposes of comparison. These are "The Sower," by Jean Francois Millet (1814-1875); and "The Song of the Lark," by Jules Breton (1827-1906).

In many respects these pictures are contrasts. In the one the sower, intent on his task, strides strong and vigorously across the field; in the other the girl with head uplifted and body erect is motionless, listening intently. The sower has toiled all day, and in the fading light still toils on. The girl, with sickle in hand, is on her way to work at sunrise amid all the glories of the awakening day. The facial features of the former are repressed in order that the task may be emphasized rather than the man. The features of the girl, on the other hand, are clearly depicted in order that we might understand her nature from the expression on her face.

To appreciate the aim of Millet it is necessary to know something of his life. He was the son of a farmer in northern France and toiled in the fields until he was twenty-three, when the municipality of Cherbourg provided a subsidy that he might study in Paris. He remained there, however, only a short time. Then for eight years he tried to paint pictures of the type in popular demand, but he finally turned from this to what he had wanted to paint from the beginning, viz., the peasant at work in the fields. His first attempt



was a success, and he then moved to the village of Barbizon, where, for the remainder of his life, he painted rural scenes.

Millet knew what heavy toil meant and he also saw its significance in the world. Hence in painting the workers he often repressed details of clothing or facial features in order that essential or fundamental qualities might stand out clearly. Hence the sower here is shown as a large and vigorous man swinging along with strong strides and an even rhythmic motion. The horizon is high and the field large; for the task is closely associated with the soil. Though sowing might seem lowly, to Millet it was a task of paramount importance to mankind.

What means did Millet use to bring out the larger meaning? It is evening; the sun has gone down; the sky is luminous; the ground looks heavy and dark. The light falls on the man's back, and he is shrouded in gloom. Only his head and shoulders extend above the horizon. By this means the artist has united the sower with the ground. Naturally his features are indistinct. Behind him are the beauties of the sunset, but he does not see them. He toils on late in the evening, for sowing must be done. It is an essential part in the world's work. Furthermore, Millet made his sower large, with strong stride, marching along with rhythmic movement, swinging his arm to sow each handful of grain; for there is something dignified and grand about this task of sowing; it saves the nation from starving. Though the picture may not be "pretty" there is inspiration in it. It is beautiful. It is ideal.

Breton, on the other hand, had an entirely different idea in painting "The Song of the Lark." Breton was not born on the farm, nor did he work in the fields. But he had watched the workers, and having a strong imagination, he saw that the spirit of the worker was responsive to the beauties of nature. To him there was no drudgery in the country; there were only fine opportunities, denied to those who live in the city, to hear and see the beauties of rural life.

It is sunrise. The glory of the morning is all about this peasant girl as she walks along the path leading to the field. One hand grasps a sickle; the other hangs idly at her side. The sleeves are rolled up showing strong arms which are used to toil. The collar is low for comfort, and the apron is tucked up. There is a hard day's work ahead beneath a hot midsummer sun.

Suddenly a lark soars into the sky and sings its sweetest song. The girl follows it with her eyes and stops to listen. The day's work is for the time forgotten. She is thrilled with the song.

What a wonderful time it is! The morning breezes waft the sweet odor of flowers. The myriad sounds of all living creation awakening with the light are blended into a sweet melody. The countless flowers along the pathway with their many hues delight the traveller. Thus in his imagination Breton saw the girl delighted by the beauties about her and responsive to the song.

Breton wrote about a visit to the country in his autobiography: "I luxuriated in all the effluence of the life of nature—the effervescent

life of plants wet with the morning dew, the waving of the grain in the morning breeze, the rapturous songs of the larks heralding the dawn, flaming poppies, modest cornflowers, odors which waken ecstatic thrills."

This makes clear the idea of Breton. In his walks through the country he saw the peasants, the flowers, the grain fields, the sunsets, etc.; but he ignored the toil and drudgery of existence. So, too, his humble peasant girl sees these beauties and hears the songs of the birds; and her spirit responds to these and is lifted above the commonplace.

The composition is simple but strong. The tall erect figure cuts across the horizontal lines which give the impression of repose, or stillness. The details of the landscape are subordinated to the listening girl in order that the inner meaning may be the more easily understood.

Hence we see that both the environments and the natures of these two artists appear in their creations. Millet was a peasant; Breton a poet. Millet lived in the country and knew the spirit as well as the drudgery of the toiler; Breton lived in the city and imagined the spirit of the toiler, but saw not the drudgery. Both saw the peasant and his surroundings—the one as if held fast by the circumstances of nature, the other exalted by its glories.

One more picture completes the list selected for the study of figure composition. This is a marine picture called "The Fog Warning," by Winslow Homer (1836-1910).

In this picture the lonely fisherman, clothed in oilskins and "sou'-wester," holds his oars still while he turns his head in the direction of the distant vessel and listens to the low intermittent whistle warning him that the fog is coming. The sky is heavily overcast; the day is about to close; the ship is a long way off and in the distance the rolling mass of fog sweeps along soon to envelop him. How solitary the fisherman appears on the wide expanse of water! The choppy waves strike against the sides of the boat in whose stern may be seen his prize catch of the day.

Homer, who was born in Boston, was a truly American painter. Studying only in the United States, and having a deep interest in the sea and in the Maine fishermen, he gives us a faithful interpretation of the work and the dangers of these toilers of the deep. In doing so he did not repress anything; neither did he invent or supply anything through the imagination. He preferred to paint the situation as he saw it and leave the facts to speak for themselves.

This picture reveals his style. It is a true picture of a situation in the North Atlantic. Each object is carefully painted. His rendering of the choppy sea is remarkably clear and exact, and every detail of the boat is faithfully reproduced.

### QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. State clearly the aim of portraiture. Give briefly the aim of each of the artists whose portraits you have studied.

2. In George Gisze you see the merchant; in Mrs. Siddons you see the actress; and in the portrait by Whistler you see the mother in the home. What has the painter introduced in each picture to make his purpose clear?

3. Contrast the portraits of George Gisze and Mrs. Siddons along the following lines:

- (a) The purpose or aim of the artist.
- (b) The arrangement of the figure to accomplish this aim.
- (c) The light.
- (d) The result obtained.

4. Describe the portrait of Whistler's mother with respect to:

- (a) The arrangement.
- (b) The mother.
- (c) The color scheme.

5. Compare "The Dance of the Nymphs" and "The Cornfield" as to:

- (a) The aims of the artists.
- (b) How they accomplished their aims.
- (c) Arrangement.
- (d) Excellence as landscapes.

6. Give in detail the reasons why "The Sistine Madonna" is generally considered the greatest picture in religious art.

7. What was the purpose of Rubens in painting "The Descent from the Cross," and what means did he use to attain this purpose?

8. Describe "The Sistine Madonna" as to:

- (a) The purpose of the artist.
- (b) The composition.
- (c) The use and symbolism of color.

9. Contrast the aims of Millet and Breton as shown in the pictures studied. How do you account for these differences?

10. Describe "The Sower" under the following headings:

- (a) The aim of the artist and how he achieves it.
- (b) The arrangement.
- (c) The general appearance, time of day, and color scheme.
- (d) Any qualities which appeal to you.

11. Describe "The Song of the Lark" with respect to:

- (a) The time of day.
- (b) The aim of the artist.
- (c) The arrangement.
- (d) Any qualities which appeal to you.

12. Describe "The Fog Warning." State the purpose of the artist and any qualities in the picture which interest you.

13. Make a line drawing of the composition of "The Fog Warning."

N.B. It is expected that the pupil will have in his possession a copy of each of the pictures studied and will use these notes with the picture before him.

It is also suggested that other pictures of various types, be collected and compared with those studied. From many sources Italian, Flemish, German, Dutch, French, English, Spanish, American and Canadian pictures may be secured. A study of the art qualities in each is of great value in appreciation.